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COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, November 12, 2024
5:30 PM
William J. Johnston Middle School

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT : Chair Alexander Oliphant, Vice-Chair Christopher Rivers, Secretary Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Michelle Millington and Rosemary Gignac

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT : Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Jessica L. Kuckel, Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué, William J Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) Principal Christopher Bennett, WJJMS Assistant Principal Stacey Ewings, Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) Principal Elise Butson.

OTHERS PRESENT : Director of Finance and Operations Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Alyssa Fratoni, Student Board Member Abigail Stillwell, Sgt. Resident Trooper Zach Cash, SRO John Zavalick, and Security Consultant Tom Dillon.

1. MEETING OPENING

1.1. Call to Order
A.Oliphant called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM

1.2 Roll Call
A.Oliphant conducted roll call of the Board.
Board Member Stefanie Tracey-Calash not present.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

A.Stillwell arrived at 5:34 PM

2. RECOGNITIONS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.1. Jack Jackter Intermediate School Math Exemplars Recognition

Superintendent Sullivan thanked the teachers and faculty members that took time out of their evenings to present the data to the Board:

From JJIS - Jennifer Totten, Kristen Cleasby-Gayle, Tammie Bakaj, Kerry Zrenda and Marjorie Perry.

From WJJMS - Tiffany Smith, Bonnie McAneny, Jennifer D'Aiuto, Amanda LaSaracina, Erin Duggan and Kristen Magoun.

Kristen Cleasby-Gayle presented the Exemplars problem solving program
The Board thanked the teachers for coming to present and said it was very informative to see the growth trends from an evaluation perspective.

3. STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS REPORT

3.1. Report from the Student Board Members

Abigail Stillwell stated that the BA halls are filled with energy and excitement to keep everyone engaged. The Sock Donation Drive yielded over 300 pairs of socks, which surpassed the goal. Girls Soccer won ECC's. There was a wonderful Band/Choir performance recently and soon, there will be a Powderpuff Flag Football Game for Junior and Senior Girls.

4. *ADDITIONS / CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

4.1. *New Agenda Items

BA and JJIS Liaisons requested an update be given in section 12 of the agenda.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1. For Public Comments, please see Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

No public comment

6. *CONSENT AGENDA

6.1. *Approval of Minutes from Tuesday, October 8, 2024 Regular Meeting

Motion by: C. Rivers
Motion to approve minutes from October 8, 2024
Second: M. Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.2. *Approval of WJJMS Field Trip to MA on May 23, 2025

Motion by: D. Antonacci
Motion to approve WJJMS Field Trip to MA on May 23, 2025
Second: M. Millington
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.3. *Approval of WJJMS Field Trip to NY on April 9, 2025

M. Millington was concerned about the cost to students being $185 to attend the field trip. Principal Bennett stated that there are scholarship options to those invited on the field trip that cannot afford it.
Motion by: M. Gignac
Motion to approve WJJMS Field Trip to NY on April 9, 2025
Second: R. Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.4. *Approval of BA Theatrics Fundraising

Motion by: M. Gignac
Motion to approve BA Theatrics Fundraising for $1,595.10
Second: D. Antonacci
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.5. *Approval of Budget Transfer over $5,000.00

Motion by: M. Millington

Motion to approve budget transfer of $22,320.72 from Private OOD to Classified Job Salaries

Second: D. Antonacci
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.6. *Approval of BA Request for setting Commencement Ceremony date for 2025
Motion by: M. Gignac
Motion to approve suggested Commencement Ceremony date of June 12, 2025
Second: M. Millington
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

7. REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

7.1. Data Showcase

Superintendent Sullivan again stated that he was very grateful for everyone coming out to represent JJIS and WJJMS. He is looking forward to having CES and BA do something similar to showcase the good work going on throughout the entire district.

7.2. HVAC Project

Superintendent Sullivan stated that the HVAC project at Bacon has to be reset due to changes in regulations. C. Rivers asked what the timeline would be to get back to where we were with USA Mechanical. Superintendent Sullivan is hoping that around January, we should know more. He stated that the scope of the work is completely different because of the new regulations. He stated that we are looking at Chiller Systems instead of the previous HVAC system. The Board decided we will keep an Update on the HVAC Project on all regular meeting agendas until a decision is made.

7.3. Sound Fields

Superintendent Sullivan stated that Colchester has been a recipient of a state bond to purchase Sound Fields for all of the Schools in the District. These Sound Fields will address ADA issues and will benefit all students and staff. Sound Fields are small speaker systems placed in each classroom. Students who have hearing needs would be able to plug into them and get the sound directly into their hearing aid or implant. It would be beneficial for teachers and students because there would be microphones that could be passed around the classroom for presentations, etc. Two Vendors were met last week and this week who did a walk through of the schools and there is the possibility of a third vendor as well.

7.4. Athletics

Superintendent Sullivan recognized all Fall Athletics Teams. "Volleyball and both soccer teams qualified for the post season and girls soccer one ECC's. Both soccer teams made it to the second round of the tournament. Some disappointment but also a great deal of pride for the season that those teams had. In terms of the athletic complex at Bacon Academy, I know that the district was approached by the Recreation Needs Committee and the First Selectman a few weeks ago because of the work we had done with Field Turf so far and they asked us to have them come to a meeting and do a presentation. The overall future of this project and where things are headed are ultimately in that avenue. So the Recreation Needs Committee, to the best of my knowledge, will make a recommendation to the Board of Selectman and the Board of Selectman will determine what happens, where it happens, how it happens, because

that Recreation Committee is not just looking at Bacon Academy but looking at the community as a whole. I don't know if there are any questions on athletics or Field Turf, I will answer what I can."

D. Antonacci "Regarding the design proposal that Field Turf is presenting, did you approach the attorneys on that?"

Superintendent Sullivan "Are you referring to the motion that this Board made last winter?"

D. Antonacci "Yes."

Superintendent Sullivan "Last winter, this Board talked about possibly moving forward with the design proposal from Field Turf. Citizens during Public Comment expressed concern on the legality of moving forward with that design proposal through cooperative purchasing. So this Board here directed me to either talk to an attorney or DAS to find out about the legal liability of all of that. I spoke to the DAS office and they said it was dependent on your town's purchasing policy. I spoke with our attorney at Shipman and she also indicated that the legality of moving forward was tied to the town's purchasing policy. It indicated that the way the purchasing policy was written at that point in time, that while you could use cooperative purchasing, the dollar threshold, the way it had been written, was quite low and would not match the scope of this work. They indicated that if the purchasing policy would change for the town, that we would then be able to move forward. The town's purchasing policy was changed last spring. We signed this agreement and moved forward after that time"

D. Antonacci "Thank you. I have another question, since a citizen made a comment recently attacking your integrity on this project. I am going to read this out loud, this is a facebook post. 'This is a Board of Ed project that Colchester Superintendent of school Dan Sullivan has been fiercely advocating for. Superintendent Sullivan has also taken steps in an attempt to bypass the traditional municipal bid process. In April, Superintendent Sullivan was finally forced to admit to a relationship with the subcontractor, the same one in this allegation of bribery, only after being pressured by several Colchester citizens in public meetings.' I am just wondering what your response might be to that?"

Superintendent Sullivan "Well there is a lot to unpack there. Let's start with a little bit of history. When I was hired to work in Colchester, one of the first things that I did was make myself available to really all members of the school community to gather information. I had small group meetings, one to one meetings, to identify the strengths of the district, things we felt were either opportunities for growth or needs in the district. One of the things that was pointed out to me very early was that the athletic complex at Bacon Academy was outdated, that the fields were not in good shape, they didn't have lights and that we were really behind the times. Also very early on, I spoke to Board Leadership, and that was Alex and Margo, and said to get a better understanding of what we could do, I could go to a company that's on the bid list, identified Field Turf, I could have them come out and look at the complex at Bacon Academy. Some people might question why Field Turf and I think it's really important to note it is not a random company, it is not my neighbors uncle kind of thing. Field Turf has done many European soccer stadiums and most stadiums in the NFL. In Connecticut, they have done Glastonbury High School, Fitch High School, New London High School, Hall and Conard, Valley Regional, Griswold, Rockville, Fairfield University, Quinnipiac University, Mitchell College, Conn College, Sacred Heart University and apparently the Coast Guard Academy. So when you look at the scope of work, it makes sense to bring them in to look at what our needs are. Relative to the accusation of the relationship, I don't have the minutes of the meeting, I don't even know which meeting it was last year, but I will say the same thing tonight that I roughly said then. Kevin Foley, who is in essence the

owner of Liberty Landscaping with his wife Katherine, they were parents at South Windsor High School where I was the Principal for 10 years. They live in South Windsor and when I moved to South Windsor and was waiting to move into my home, I rented a home that they had for rent on Main Street. That is the depth of my relationship with Kevin Foley. As I pointed out then, people saw it as sarcastic, but just to give context, we have never gone out for a meal, we have never met for happy hour, we don't exchange christmas cards or go to BBQ's. He was my landlord and a parent. He was also a company that did the grass field at the front entrance to South Windsor High School when I was Principal. Much like this project, as the Principal of the high school, I did not determine who was hired to do the landscaping on an athletic field. That was handled by the Board of Education. In Colchester, relative to an athletic field project at Bacon Academy, the town has made it clear that that's not going to be decided by the Board of Education. While that is not typical of most communities, that's what happening here. It's not my decision who we hire, not even my place to recommend who we hire. When we brought this project forward last year, it was discussed by this Board and the feeling at that time was that doing this kind of project would give a really good understanding to the Board of Education and to the town what the needs were at Bacon Academy by virtue of taking test pits, and by doing, in essence, engineering work, the town would have a much better understanding of what could and couldn't work because there's been a lot of questions regarding drainage, etc."

D. Antonacci "So essentially, we are providing recommendation and the Board of Selectman will make the final decision based on the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee and all information is going to the Ad Hoc Committee from us with the design proposal?"

Superintendent Sullivan "Yeah. And relative to the comment about an allegation of a bribe, it is my understanding that the First Selectman has gone to the state attorney and the police to investigate it and I don't have any more to say on it other than I hope it is thoroughly investigated and they get to the bottom of it because any sort of allegation of corruption is crucial and I know that my integrity and my reputation are important to me and I imagine that other people feel the same way about their name and their reputation so this kind of stuff can't just live in the gray."

D. Antonacci "Thank you"

M. Millington "Can I just add something really quickly for anyone that's listening? I would just like to clarify that the bribe that you brought up had nothing to do with you. What we were talking about was a citizen who has come forward to say that they were approached to be bribed because they are on the Ad Hoc Committee. I just want to make sure that anybody listening didn't have the wrong impression of that. That we are not speaking of you or anyone on the Board of Education when it comes to a bribe. That was something completely separate from us."

D. Antonacci "Yes, thank you"

C. Rivers "One quick additional clarifying point. One of the benefits we thought of, almost a year ago, of hiring a company with money we have left over from end of year funds was going through the bid list, in particular, would allow a company to do some of the engineering feasibility side of it, and also produce an itemized list, understanding that the plans associated to the itemized list, if it went to a different vendor, would have to be redone. Understanding how engineering works, that no one feels comfortable using another engineer's plans, but from an itemized list perspective, from a feasibility perspective, would just be more things to be considered. And to the point that I think you made pretty clear, and I think as many opportunities as we can, we should keep making this claim. It will be a town decision, any additional information we can provide to help with that, great. But it is a town decision and we are just trying to

help by providing additional information. Is that fair?

Superintendent Sullivan "Absolutely, and I think it ties back to one of the Working Groups that, probably the one that put in the most time, was the one looking at our facility needs and I think this really complimented their concerns. It's one thing to say that the fields need to be addressed. It's a whole other thing to bring the supporting documents as to the state of the fields and the work that needs to be done. I think there was legit questions, whether that is the right location for the fields because of the drainage issues that have occurred over the years. I think this is all really valuable information. The one part of the comment that Donna read that I also didn't thoroughly answer is I have been a staunch advocate not so much of Field Turf as much as using the cooperative purchasing. I do believe that hiring a vendor who does a design build project and owns every aspect of the project is in the best interest of the town. In too many other school communities, Principals and Superintendents talk and I played the role of Principal for 13 years. There is nothing more disheartening than having a field that is artificial turf that can't be used because there's ripped seams or because there's some sort of other safety issue that emerges and nobody takes responsibility for it because the installer says it was either the product or the person who manufactures the product says we were just matching the design work and this is what they called for any everyone is pointing fingers at each other. No one is taking responsibility. The community is getting lawyers involved and the people who suffer at the end of the day are the kids because the field is closed. When you have one stop shopping, you don't care whose fault it is. You just say 'hey look, this is yours, we have a game on Thursday, get it fixed.' So that is why I am a staunch advocate for using cooperative purchasing with a design build."

M. Millington "And I think, if I may just add one last thing, I won't speak for everyone because I don't want to do that. But if I remember correctly, the entire Board, or I will say myself, was also very much in the same position . We felt that we wanted a company that could take care of everything, that we weren't going to have a company that said 'oh yeah go talk to the installer, you got to talk to this one, you got to talk to that one, we have to put it out for an architect' . All of the things, we were trying to use our money wisely and make it the best project that we could. And somewhere in notes, way back when, we discussed having that type of company. I don't know when either but somewhere it's in there."

A.Stillwell left the meeting at 6:27 PM

8. <u>PRIORITY DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS</u>

8.1. *Discussion and Possible Action on School Safety

Superintendent Sullivan gave a presentation on School Safety.

Here are some key points:

- Focus on prevention over reaction
- Address concerns early
- Building relationships and mental health
- Need someone who is able to look at trends and fix them before something happens
- CPS met with EHPS last week to discuss best practices
- Balance security with a welcoming school atmosphere
- Walk Interior/Exterior before school starts, monitor and address potential threats, assist in emergencies, foster relationships by being a daily, consistent presence.
- Bridge between schools and local law enforcement

- Trust and Transparency in the district increase when safety is a shared point.

Security Consultant Tom Dillon stated that it is important to build relationships with public safety. He thanked Central Office for being the most cooperative when it comes to the 183 page All Hazards Plan that needs to be submitted yearly to the State.

C. Rivers asked T. Dillon if there was a more condensed version of the 183 page Plan. T. Dillon responded that editable Flip Charts were made that are available in each building for easy access that have all of the information Administrators would need in the event of an emergency. Principal Bennett brought in an example so the Board could see.

Sgt. Cash stated that the work that has been done and is being done is good, but ASO's are the next bridge to enhance safety and security and should be taken seriously throughout the district.

C. Rivers asked how the schools currently communicate with Colchester PD. SRO Zavalick stated that each school had their own radio to communicate with him and he communicates with the Police Department.

SRO Zavalick stated that 3 of Colchester's current safety officers could become ASO's because of their past employment. He also stated that he could be an ASO as well.

Superintendent Sullivan stated that the purpose of this presentation was not to promote ASO's as much as point out current staffing and decide our priority moving forward. BA after school hours is a big thinking point as well as a possible full time Director of School Safety.

Superintendent Sullivan left the meeting at 6:52 PM.

9. POLICIES - FIRST READ

9.1. 3250 *Materials/Service Fees, Fines, Charges*
3260 *Sales, Trade-In, Disposal of Books, Equipment and Supplies Disposal of Obsolete or Surplus Equipment*
3281 *School Fund Raisers and Online Fundraising Campaigns - Crowdfunding*
3313 *Relations with Vendors*
3324.1 *Contracts*
3410 *System of Accounts*
3420 *Classification of Expenditures*
3434 *Periodic Audit*
3451 *Petty Cash Funds*
3510 *Operations and Maintenance of Plan*
3513.1 *Energy Conservation*

D. Antonacci went over eliminations and edits, the above policies will go to Second Read at the December Regular Meeting.
C. Rivers asked that a reference sheet of eliminated policies be made that include the CT General Statute that covers the elimination reasoning.

10. POLICIES - SECOND READ

10.1. 3240 *Tuition Fees*
Motion by: M. Gignac
Motion to approve second read Policy 3240 *Tuition Fees* with the effective change date of January 1, 2025.
Second: M. Millington
Roll Call: All in favor

Vote: Motion carried

11. POLICIES - FIRST AND SECOND READ

11.1. 3320 *Purchasing Policy*
D. Antonacci went over to edit.

12. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

12.1. Ad Hoc Budget Committee
Committee Chair M. Gignac stated that things are going well. She stated that R. Linkkila has been working hard to build a format for presentations for the Budget. Board of FInance Chair S. Chapman joined the latest meeting and has asked to be a part of all future meetings as well. She spoke about the presentation from ClearGov and the comparison that the Committee is making to what we currently have. The next meeting is Monday, November 18, 2024.

12.2. Budget Finance Committee
Committee Chair C. Rivers explained that the 288% used line item on the most recent monthly budget report is due to accounting for the carpeting and it will go down and balance out.

12.3. Curriculum Committee
Committee Chair D. Antonacci stated that at the last meeting, there was discussion about changes to JJIS Report Cards.

12.4. Update from JJIS Liaison
M. Millington attended the PTO sponsored Jack-o-Lantern celebrations and the Veterans Day Celebration

12.5. Update from BA Liaison
D. Antonacci attended the Veterans Day Celebration and spoke about some upcoming events such as the Bake Sale, Mr. Bacon and A Christmas Carol. She also congratulated the Youth Scholarship Award Winners.

13. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION ITEMS

13.1. Next Meetings
Tuesday, December 10, 2024 6:00 PM

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by: A.Oliphant
Motion to adjourn.
Second: M.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

A.Oliphant adjourned the meeting at 7:11 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Alyssa Fratoni, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent